

Recreation & Access:

Including Marine Patrol, Boater Education, and Safety Programs

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Overview

The Delta is a unique geographic region that provides exceptional recreational opportunities including boating, fishing, hunting, hiking, biking, camping, and wildlife viewing. Recreational users originate from both within and outside of the Delta. Many of the visitors value the wide expanses of open land, interlaced waterways, historic towns, and the feeling of a slower pace of life within the Delta.

Navigable waterways in the Delta-Suisun area are publicly accessible and currently constitute the majority of the recreational opportunities within the Delta. Boating use totals more than 6.4 million visitor days annually, composed of 2.13 million annual boat trips in the larger Delta-Suisun area (*Status and Trends of Delta-Suisun Service*, California Department of Water Resources, May 2007). The Aquatic Recreation Component of the Delta Recreation Strategy Plan prepared by the Delta Protection Commission forecasts demand for boating recreation through 2020 and identifies a deficit of facilities.

Most of the recreational facilities within the Delta are provided through private marinas. Several thousand boat berths are located in the Primary Zone, almost equally allocated among Contra Costa, Sacramento, and San Joaquin counties. Private facilities also provide launching facilities, recreational vehicle and tent camping, picnicking, restaurants, and bait and tackle shops. Waterskiing and riding Personal Water Craft (PWC) 5 are popular water-oriented activities.

The majority of the land within the Delta is privately owned, which reduces the availability of land-based recreation. Five fishing access/launching facilities owned by the California Department of Fish and Game and managed by Sacramento and Yolo counties are located within the Delta. San Joaquin County provides land and water access at Westgate Park. Brannan Island State Recreation Area provides boat launching, camping, swimming, nature interpretation, and wind surfing. Hunting occurs mainly on private lands; although some hunting is allowed on State- and federally-owned lands and waterways.

Concerns regarding existing and future recreational activities within the Delta include compatibility with agricultural operations and other private property uses, funding availability for the long-term maintenance and supervision of existing recreational facilities and for the development of new recreational facilities, compatibility with wildlife uses and levee maintenance requirements, overuse of existing facilities and popular waterways, the abandonment of vessels and other debris within Delta waterways, and increased demands on law enforcement and other emergency response providers.

Opportunities are available for new recreational facilities to be provided within the Delta on publicly-owned land. Examples include pedestrian access on publicly-owned levees adjacent to Brannan Island State Recreation Area; construction of new visitor facilities, interpretive facilities and trails at the Stone Lake National Wildlife Refuge; and pedestrian trails, visitor facilities, and water access facilities at State Park's Delta Meadows Project.

In addition, Senate Bill 1556, signed by the Governor in September 2006, creates a California Delta Trail and requires the Delta Protection Commission to create a plan for designing, constructing, and maintaining this trail. The California Delta Trail is planned to be a bike, pedestrian and equine trail system and recreation corridor along more than 1,000 miles of Delta waterfront that will connect with the 450-mile San Francisco Bay Trail.

Goals

To promote continued recreational use of the land and waters of the Delta; to ensure that needed facilities that support such uses are constructed, maintained, and supervised; to protect landowners from unauthorized recreational uses on private lands; and to maximize public funds for recreation by promoting public-private partnerships and multiple use of Delta lands.

Policies

P-1.

Ensure appropriate planning, development and funding for expansion, ongoing maintenance and supervision of existing public recreation and access areas.

P-2.

Encourage expansion of existing privately-owned, water-oriented recreation and access facilities that are consistent with local General Plans, zoning regulations and standards.

P-3.

Assess the need for new regional public and private recreation and access facilities to meet increasing public need, and ensure that any new facilities are prioritized, developed, maintained and supervised consistent with local, state, and federal laws and regulations. Ensure that adequate public services are provided for all existing, new, and improved recreation and access facilities.

P-4.

Encourage new regional recreational opportunities, such as Delta-wide trails, which take into consideration environmental, agricultural, infrastructure, and law enforcement needs, and private property boundaries. Also, encourage opportunities for water, hiking, and biking trails.

P-5.

Encourage provision of publicly funded amenities such as picnic tables and boat-in destinations in or adjacent to and complimentary to private facilities, particularly if the private facility will agree to supervise and manage such amenities, thus lowering the long-term cost to the public.

P-6.

Support multiple uses of Delta agricultural lands, such as seasonal use for hunting and provision of wildlife habitat.

P-7.

Support improved access for bank fishing along State highways, county roads, and other appropriate areas where safe and adequate parking, law enforcement, waste management and sanitation facilities, and emergency response can be provided and where proper rights-of-access have been acquired.

P-8.

Ensure, for the sake of the environment and water quality, the provision of appropriate restroom, pump-out and other sanitation and waste management facilities at new and existing recreation sites, including marinas; encourage the provision of amenities including but not limited to picnic tables and boat-in destinations.

P-9.

Encourage the development of funding and implementation strategies by appropriate governing bodies for the surrender and/or removal of water-borne debris and dilapidated, unseaworthy and abandoned vessels from waterways, to minimize navigational and environmental hazards.

P-10.

Promote and encourage Delta-wide communication, coordination, and collaboration on boating and waterway-related programs including but not limited to marine patrols, removal of debris and abandoned vessels, invasive species control and containment, clean and safe boating education and enforcement, maintenance of existing anchorage, mooring and berthing areas, and emergency response in the Delta.

P-11.

Recognizing existing laws, encourage establishment of Delta-wide law enforcement protocols on local public nuisance and safety issues, such as trespassing, littering, and theft.

P-12.

Support and encourage programs for waterways that provide opportunities for safe boating and recreation, including removal of floating and sunken debris and abandoned vessels from Delta waterways in collaboration with appropriate agencies.

P-13.

Support the development of a strategic plan, in consultation with all law enforcement agencies having jurisdiction in the Delta, to improve law enforcement and the use of available resources to ensure an adequate level of public safety. The strategic plan shall identify resources to implement the plan.